407 tractors in time for either the spring or the autumn ploughing season in 1946. The first shipment of UNRRA tractors arrived in the Republic in December. Altogether, UNRRA expects to deliver about 800 tractors. The Byelorussian Minister of Agriculture gave the Mission an estimate that 20,000 15-horsepower tractor units would be needed to reorganize farm work on an adequate level of mechanization.[1]

In speaking of the need for farm machinery in this Republic, the UNRRA Mission said: "It is important to recognize that Byelorussian farming is not a hand-tool agriculture. Rehabilitation and recovery here does not mean a better hoe - it means a better tractor. It means more combine threshers, more grain drills and mechanized equipment. Rehabilitation of agriculture here means re-establishment of the pre-war rate of mechanization of farms, which, in turn, will release labour for still more tractor factories and still more industrialization. Byelorussian farmers spaded by hand 200,000 hectares (half a million acres) in 1945 and half that amount in 1946. Such labours do great credit to the industry of the farmers, but a hungry Byelorussia and a hungry world will not be fed by such primitive farming methods."

Farm Buildings

727 By the end of 1946 enough housing had been repaired or built in
362 the B.S.S.R. to enable 250,000 families (about 1.5 million people) to move from dugouts or caves into houses. Rural schools had also been transferred from dugouts to new premises. The Byelorussian newspaper Sovietskaya Byelorussia (issues of December 17 and 24, 1946) reported that 254,000 houses had been restored in rural areas since liberation. Eighty-two thousand had been rebuilt in 1944, 112,000 in 1945, and 60,000 in 1946, and 45,556 houses were still in process of construction. As at the end of 1946, 10,000 rural families (50,000 people) were still living in dugouts and caves.

Farm Manpower

464 Besides the deplorable housing situation, which contributes to lowered work efficiency, there is a great shortage of labour. Since the war it is women rather than men who constitute the main labour force on Byelorussian farms. UNRRA Mission observations in mid-1946 gave a ratio of four to six women to every man. In some sections, 80 to 90 per cent. of the workers were women. On one farm visited the labour force consisted of five men, 75 women, and 21 young boys and girls. A total of 43 men from this one farm had been killed during the war.

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1 The 15-horsepower unit is the common method of computing tractor numbers. Most Soviet tractors are larger than 15-horsepower, but a 45-horsepower machine would be considered, for example, as equivalent to three tractor units. An editorial in Sovietskaya Byelorussia, Minsk, January 8, 1947, stated that the average output per 15-horsepower tractor in 1946 was 338 hectares of ploughing, sowing, harvesting, and threshing, which is 73 hectares higher than the average for 1945.

Housing Reconstruction

727 The cities of Byelorussia were universally laid waste by the Germans, and even today they are still in ruins with great empty spaces and blocks of gutted buildings. Rebuilding is proceeding slowly.

•362 185 According to official estimates, 74 per cent. of the housing space in cities and raion centres of the B.S.S.R. was destroyed during the war. The Five Year Plan calls for the restoration of 4,200,000 square metres of urban housing during the next five years, of which 1.5 million square metres are to be constructed by individual home builders assisted by state loans. During the two years between liberation and September 1946, a total of 1.2 million square metres of housing had been restored in cities and raion centres; but this was the easiest part of the work, since it involved mostly the repair of those buildings which still had some walls standing. Housing restoration will have to move at a faster rate than 600,000 square metres a year to reach the 4.2 million square metres goal by 1950, when there is to be an estimated 8.2 million square metres of urban housing space in Byelorussia.

In the restoration plans, provision is made to erect three pre-fabricated house factories with a combined annual output capacity of 600,000 square metres of housing by 1950.

The long-term housing plan is to provide 9 square metres per person, according to the Mayor of Minsk. However, in October 1946 facilities were much below that standard, and it seemed doubtful to the UNRRA Mission whether the figure would be reached by 1950.

The present per capita housing space available is not known. But in cities like Gomel, UNRRA Mission observers have been given estimates that available houses are occupied at double to triple their pre-war capacity.

The only available figures on pre-war housing are those for the first Five Year Plan period. These apply to what were then classed as "okrug", or regional cities, of which there were in 1927, eleven with a combined population of approximately 540,000. In 1927-28 they had a total of 3,093,000 square metres of housing space, occupied at the rate of 5.5 square metres per person. The first Five Year Plan called for expanding the housing space in "okrug" cities to a total of 4,263,000 square metres, occupied at the rate of 6.69 square metres per person.

The target of 8.2 million square metres of urban housing space by 1950 is about double the 1932 figure. This amount, including housing in some 170 raion (district) centres, is distributed among what are classed as "oblast" cities (these governed directly by the oblast or regional soviet as well as by the local city soviet), which were 18 in number in 1945. Among this number are all those cities classed as "okrug" cities in 1926, plus seven cities in the western oblasts; Baranovichi, Brest, Vileika, Grodno, Lida, Molodechno, and Pinsk.

362 185 These seven cities were not included in the 1939 census, when the total urban population of Byelorussia was determined as nearly 1.4 million persons. Assuming that the urban centres of Byelorussia merely recover their pre-war population, and if the urban residents of western Byelorussia be included, the per capita urban housing space available in 1950 will certainly be much less than 9 square metres, since at that rate 8.2 million square metres could supply only about 900,000 occupants. The actual per person rate of urban housing space in 1950 is more likely to be near the 1932-33 rate if planned targets of reconstruction are achieved.

727 In the rural areas of the B.S.S.R., shelter demolition amounted to 400,000 dwellings of collective farmers, and an indeterminate number of individual peasant homes. In the western oblasts, as has already been noted, the great majority of farmers are not yet in collectives. In a single oblast, Molodechno, 16,000 peasant farms were laid waste. In Grodno oblast, where 117,000 civilians were slain by the Germans, demolition of homes was on a equal, if not greater scale. Thousands of individual peasant homes were also destroyed in other oblasts. A reported total of 1.2 million buildings of all kinds, houses, barns, sheds, offices, were destroyed in the rural areas. As at October 1946, 235,000 dwellings had been restored in the villages, providing shelter for 1.5 million people who were then able to move out of temporary shelters, mostly dugouts and caves. On the whole, progress in the restoration of shelter seems to be more rapid in the villages than in the cities.

Supplementary Aid from the U.S.S.R.

727 362 On December 31, 1946, the Byelorussian Council of Ministers published in "Sovietskaya Byelorussia" a statement that at its request the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R. had adopted a decree providing for assistance in the restoration of raions of the B.S.S.R. which had especially suffered from the occupation.

Under the terms of the decree, 27 million roubles have been granted by the U.S.S.R. for expenditure on 2,000 dwelling houses to be constructed in the areas of Byelorussia most devastated by the war. Built at state expense, these houses are to provide shelter for the most needy: families of war invalids, and of fighters (both army and partisan) killed in the war. The total fund is allocated for distribution among 38 districts or raions which are all situated in the eastern and central oblasts of the Republic. Vitebsk, Polotsk, Gomel, Mogilev, Minsk, Bobruisk, and Polessia oblasts are to benefit by the grant.